

Missouri Assessment Program Spring 2004

Communication Arts

Released Items

Grade 11

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Excerpt from *Far North* by Will Hobbs, copyright © 1996 by Will Hobbs. Used by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

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Directions

This excerpt from the book *Far North* describes the adventures of two boys who survive a plane crash. Read the passage. Then answer Numbers 1 through 5.

Two sixteen-year-old boys make their way through the wilderness of northern Canada. One of the boys is from Texas and has been attending school in the North while his father works on an oil pipeline. There he meets Raymond, a Native American from the area. The two boys are now trying to get to Raymond's village. Raymond has been injured and must ride on a homemade toboggan, which previously carried supplies.

From *Far North* by Will Hobbs

Now just keep pulling. Don't set your sights way down into the canyon. Set a goal just a hundred yards or so ahead at a time, that's plenty. One football-field length. One football field and then the next.

The cold seared my windpipe and my lungs. My sweat was falling into my eyes and freezing the lashes shut. The packsack was so heavy, digging into my shoulders, but there wasn't room for everything on the toboggan. *So far to go!* I thought, and I'm starting out a complete wreck. My knee is gimped up, and that's a fact. I just don't want Raymond to know how bad it still is. And then there's my ribs, from where I slipped on the ice and dropped the moose meat. My side's aching again from that. My lips are split open in a couple of places, so's the palm of my hand, always there throbbing to remind me. My fingers are a mess, burned in spots, chapped, cracked. Somewhere along the line frostbite got the tip of my nose and my chin. . . .

Can't do that! I told myself angrily. You wouldn't do it before; don't give in to it now. Think about somebody else—think about Raymond. Is he cold? Yes, he's cold. Will he get frostbit not moving around? I hope not—he's wearing your boots, they're warmer than his. He's wearing enough clothes to start a surplus store; he'll be okay. Johnny's parka is over him for a blanket.

What about Raymond's foot? Think about that. Think about how bone surgeons can do amazing things, even if they have to rebreak some of the bones and fasten everything with pins before they cast it. It'll feel awful good to come out of that operation with a cast on his foot finally, and then to hear he'll get normal use of it back. Maybe Wayne Gretzky¹ won't have to worry about him becoming a hockey star, but he'll be able to do just about anything else, whatever he wants to do.

What will he want to do?

What are *you* going to do? Head back to Texas, what do you think? Head back where it's warm as soon as you can get out of here—your grandparents will take you back in a heartbeat. Spring in San Antonio! Fiesta! Think about the Battle of the Flowers, what a parade. And the Flambeaux night parade with all the torches. Think about squeezing into a few blocks with about ten thousand people at "A Night in Old San Antonio," all those girls with flowers in their hair. . . . Think about the River Walk, taking a girl out to one of those nice restaurants along the river. . . .

Think about summer. . . . Think how you could lie there on a real bed with a real mattress, with only your sheet and you wouldn't even need that. . . . Think about it being too hot to sleep, what that feels like. You'll be lying there trying to

¹**Wayne Gretzky:** often regarded as the greatest ice hockey player in the history of the sport

Go On ►

remember what the cold felt like back up here in the Northwest Territories.

Trying to remember the cold? I thought. What, are you crazy? Try to *forget*.

"You're doing good," I heard Raymond call from behind me.

I stopped in my tracks, turned around, and grinned. "I'm going a lot of places in my head," I said.

"Me too."

"Think I'll go to Bermuda next. Or Hawaii. Maybe Tahiti." I finished my bottle of water.

"Trade you bottles," Raymond said. I knew he was right; I needed to keep drinking water. I took his full one and gave him mine.

Take a deep breath, heave, lean, grunt, pull. You're rolling again. Push off with that left foot, lift the right snowshoe high, swing the left arm forward and across to keep your momentum going, nothing solid down there to push off of but push anyway, left snowshoe high, right arm across. Keep believing, I told myself. Just keep pulling.

♦ ♦ ♦

I got busy with the ax, cut plenty of spruce bedding, layered the boughs across each other, finished up with enough tips to make the endless night-torture tolerable. Then I helped Raymond out of the toboggan. He didn't think he should lie down right away, and I knew he was right. I cut him a stick to lean on and encouraged him to hop around a little, get his circulation going. Then I grabbed a snowshoe to dig a fire pit in the snow, slashed dead branches for kindling, found my birchbark, coaxed a flame into fire, and nursed it into the living force that would keep us alive through the night.

I caught my breath, warmed my hands. Then I took down three small dead spruces and dragged them over. Raymond wanted to help, so I had him start melting some snow.

I kept the fire blazing, scooped more snow into the pot, built a lean-to, then talked Raymond into lying down. He kept trying to help, but I was afraid he'd fall, and that would make things worse. I could see how tough this was going to be on Raymond, not being able to do hardly anything. I started some water to boil meat, drank some of the

hot water I'd already made, and took some to him.

"You're like a house burning down," Raymond said. "Where'd you learn all this stuff?"

"Texas hill country. In Texas it gets a *lot* colder than here, and the canyons are a lot deeper."

"And there's little animals that look like armored cars?"

"Exactly. In the winter they just roll themselves up in a ball and freeze solid. What'll it be for dinner tonight?"

He flashed his bright smile. "How 'bout some moose?"

"Good selection. Specialty of the house." I took the ax and hacked out maybe a couple of pounds. After I got the meat boiling, I made some more hot water in the second pot. I knew I was already getting dehydrated and that would be a big danger, as hard as I was pulling. At night I had to make sure to drink all the water my body could take.

With the first sign of twilight in the morning it was time to convince bone and muscle that I could even get out of the sleeping bag. The pain in my knee was still there. I needed to find more firewood, I needed to get some water going, I needed to get a little more food in my belly and Raymond's too. I needed to remember before we started out again to fill both of the water bottles full of hot water.

At last it was all done. I packed Raymond into the toboggan, laced up my snowshoes, took my place up front, stepped inside the rope. I asked Raymond if he ever had a dog team.

"Snowmobiles are better," he said. "Go faster too."

He could see I was playing games with my head, just stalling for time. "Don't they break down?" I asked.

"Then you fix 'em."

Once I broke the toboggan loose and started it forward, all my conversations had to take place in my head alone. Imaginary conversations, remembered conversations. Conversations with my father, conversations with Raymond, conversations with my coach back in San Antonio. My coach was trying to get me to stay. Lots of compliments. "You're hard to knock off your feet," that's what he'd said. "I like how you get the extra yards after you get hit."

1

Is *Far North* an appropriate title for this passage? Use details and/or examples from the passage in your explanation.

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Go On ►

3

In the middle of the passage, the narrator begins to think about his life in Texas. Is this a good strategy for survival? Explain why or why not. Use details and/or examples from the passage to support your answer.

WRITING

Directions

Now you will write a paper in response to a writing prompt. First, read the prompt in the box below.

Then use the separate paper your teacher has given you for your prewriting activity (such as brainstorming, listing, freewriting, clustering, mapping, or drawing).

After you finish your prewriting activity, write your first draft on the separate paper your teacher has given you. Look back at your prewriting activity for ideas.

Writing Prompt

You have read passages that deal with travel to new places. Write a paper to convince a parent or guardian to allow you to travel to a new place.

Go On ►

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Directions

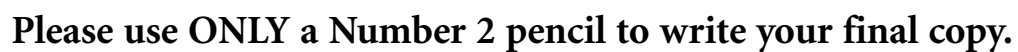
Now you have time to revise your draft. Reread your draft and think about the Writer's Checklist below. Check every box that makes a true statement about your draft.

Writer's Checklist



- ☐ My paper has an effective beginning, middle, and end.
- ☐ My paper includes effective use of paragraphing.
- ☐ My paper stays on the topic.
- ☐ My paper flows smoothly from one idea to another.
- ☐ My paper contains a strong controlling idea.
- ☐ My paper includes specific and relevant details, reasons, and examples.
- ☐ My paper uses precise and vivid language.
- ☐ My paper contains sentences that are clear and varied in structure.
- ☐ My paper includes correct grammar/usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

For every box you did not check, make the necessary revisions on your draft before you write your final copy on Pages 5 through 9.

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Session 2 | Page 5

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